

Fort Fairfield Town Council Special Meeting
Council Chambers
Monday, January 3, 2022
6:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call

Councilors: All Councilors present with the exception of Melissa Libby.

Staff: Ms. Powers, Neadra Dubois, Ella Leighton, Kevin Senal, Darren Hanson, Mitchell Dufour, Chief Cummings, Cody Fenderson, Tony Levesque

Citizens: Five

II. Prayer

III. Pledge to the Flag

IV. Public Comments

Billie Jo Sharpe made this public comment:

“Good evening. I would like to speak tonight as a citizen of Fort Fairfield. I thought it was very important that I speak tonight in front of the new council and the public. As all of you know is that I no longer work for the town and what many of you might not know is why. After I got done, I heard some very troubling reasonings as to why I got done. One of them is that I could not work with Ms. Powers, the Town Manager. I laughed at this, as this as it was furthest from the truth. But as of the last seven or eight months this was just another rumor built with hate going around Town about Town staff and management. I sat in front of the Town Council, at that time, in Executive Session, and told them the reasons I was getting done. And, I cried through the whole thing, ‘cause it was literally the hardest thing I ever had to do, in a very long time. I love my job. I love the people I worked with, including and especially Ms. Powers, the Town Manager. Working for the Town for the past eleven years, I served the people with kindness, respect, integrity and honesty. I made it a point to make sure that a person’s experience with coming into the Town office was as pleasant as possible. I went above and beyond for people. A far cry from what we sometimes receive from the public at times. Most people would say, well when you work with the public, that’s what you have to deal with. Well, no, no you don’t. Things got very heated last year with the reval and during preparation and eventually the passing of the fiscal year twenty, twenty-one budget. Tensions were high and people were on edge. With that, a relatively small group of people were repeatedly asked to be patient, take some time and speak with Town departments, staff and the Council. Not one person came into the Town Office to ever speak with the Town Manager, speak to any staff, any department heads, ever. They instead, continued to spread misinformation, had that information put into local media outlets, and really painted our Town in a negative light. There were Public Hearings held, Town Council Meetings – some of which were hours and hours long, nothing seemed to get accomplished because all people did was raise their voices, point fingers and completely disregard all of us employees. These people degraded the Town

Manager, as a woman, as unable to do her job. It became very apparent in a very short period of time that there was clearly an issue with the Town Manager being a woman. Ms. Powers was treated with utter disrespect by the public during this time. Absolutely shameful. The way some people stormed her during public comments was unbelievable. People, who many of you may look up to as outstanding businessmen and citizens? I cringe to think that they would speak to the women in their lives like that, or think that women don't belong in management positions. Maybe it's a generational thing, I don't know. But what I do know is that it is unacceptable and wrong. These same people would hopefully stand up for their mothers, their wives and daughters and all the women in their lives and defend them in their careers as a woman if anyone were to question their qualifications and abilities. So, I say shame on you. We, as women, are completely competent and capable. Capable of doing jobs that many still look at as for men to do. So if you believe that a woman shouldn't be in management, police departments, fire/ambulance departments, or even public works departments then you should be aware of Title 7 in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which will address gender discrimination. And, you probably should not be representing the Town of Fort Fairfield or the people as a Council, because we have women in each of those departments and they are all amazing professionals. And then, tell the women or the women in your lives that they can't do or be something because they're not a man. And finally, to the persons that stood in the Town Office Lobby badmouthing Town Officials and cussing about the Town Council, you are disrespectful to the ladies that were giving you a hundred percent of their time and attention to make sure your transactions went as you expected. To the person who came into the Town Office and then the Town Manager's Office and threatened her and other staff with a verbal, disgusting, homophobic, racial slurs, hate slurs, and statements – unacceptable and shame on you, and I hope he gets the help he needs. And the person that came to the Town Office and raised his voice and hand to the Town Manager and the other ladies in the Front Office, and then banging on the glass, threatening the Town Manager, saying that she was lucky that he was not on the Town Council, only to quiet down when a male employee of the Town came into sight. Shame on you. We should never feel threatened or scared to go to work every day. And lastly, to the people that spread misinformation about the Town Manager, departments and staff, you chose not want to listen, you chose to mislead people on the facts, you chose to not be kind, and you chose to break rules to get your agenda passed. All of these people gave me sleepless nights, extreme stress, and they broke my belief that people are good and honest and will do the right thing. And I'm mad. I'm mad that these people are the ones that broke my spirit and drive to continue a job that I love. These are the reasons I got done. I had to say yes to my mental and physical health and no to the hate, rumors and threats. But I would like to think that we will move forward with open minds and have the willingness to listen and actually hear what each other has to say. Eliminating departments and staff is not the right answer. We all need to work together, no matter what side of the podium we speak from. My wish is that people start acting with decency and respect and stop the hate and anger. That being said, to my former work family, I love and support every one of you. Thank you."

V. Swearing in of new Councilors

Ms. Dubois, Town Clerk, swore in Kevin C. Pelletier and James R. Ouellette as the newly elected Councilors.

VI. Election of Chairperson

Mr. Pelletier made a motion to nominate Mr. Kilcollins as the Chairperson.

Mr. Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: All Affirmative

VII. Appointments

A. Finance Committee

The Council discussed and chose new members for the Finance Committee as follows:

Members: Mitchell Butler, James Ouellette, Kevin Pelletier

Alternate Members: Melissa Libby, Robert Kilcollins

VIII. Scheduling of Regular Council Meetings

The Council agreed that the current schedule of the third Wednesday of the Month at 6:00 p.m. is the schedule that will be kept.

IX. Town of Fort Fairfield/ MSAD 20 Daycare Facility

On December 27, 2022 Ms. Powers, Chairman Butler and Superintendent Doak met with Stev Rogeski and Kevin Pelletier to discuss the daycare facility at MSAD 20. Aviest Engineering and Lagasse Drafting Services Inc. worked together to create an initial floor plan of what the facility will look like. Ms. Powers spoke with Mr. Shane McDougall of Aviest Engineering and was informed that they are donating these initial floor plans to the project.

This is a wonderful display of enthusiasm for this project. Ms. Powers is sure Council will join her in thanking Mr. McDougall and Mr. Lagasse for their very important contribution to the daycare project.

X. Minutes of the December 15, 2021 Regular Council Meeting

Mr. Butler Made a motion to accept the minutes of the December 15, 2021 Regular Council Meeting as written.

Mr. Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: All Affirmed

Ms. Powers informed the Councilors that they are all signed up for the Elected Officials Workshop, which is a mandatory workshop that all the Councilors must attend on January 26 from four to seven pm in the Council Chambers.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Butler made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Pelletier seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed

Council adjourned at 6:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois,
Council Secretary